

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

1-49. (Canceled)

50. (Withdrawn) A shaft for use with a clamp device, comprising:

    a cable which extends through a bore of the shaft; and,

    a plurality of alternating first beads and second beads, each of the first and second beads having a surface,

    wherein each of the second beads has a larger inner diameter than each of the first beads, each of the second beads is supported on the surface of two adjacent first beads at a line of contact, and the surface of each of the second beads has a convex shape at the line of contact.

51. (Withdrawn) The shaft of claim 50, wherein the surface of each of the first beads has a convex shape at the line of contact.

52. (Withdrawn) The shaft of claim 50, wherein each of the second beads has a larger outer diameter than each of the first beads.

53. (Withdrawn) The shaft of claim 50, wherein each of the second beads has a smaller outer diameter than each of the first beads.

54. (Withdrawn) The shaft of claim 50, wherein each of the second beads has the same outer diameter as each of the first beads.

55. (Withdrawn) The shaft of claim 50, wherein the line of contact is a circular line of contact.

56. (Withdrawn) A shaft for use with a clamp device, comprising:

    a cable which extends through a bore of the shaft; and,

    a plurality of alternating first beads and second beads, each of the first and second beads having a surface,

    wherein each of the second beads is supported on the surface of two adjacent first beads at a line of contact, and the surface of each of the first and second beads has a convex shape at the line of contact.

57. (Withdrawn) The shaft of claim 56, wherein each of the second beads has a larger outer diameter than each of the first beads.

58. (Withdrawn) The shaft of claim 56, wherein each of the second beads has a smaller outer diameter than each of the first beads.

59. (Withdrawn) The shaft of claim 56, wherein each of the second beads has the same outer diameter as each of the first beads.

60. (Withdrawn) The shaft of claim 56, wherein the line of contact is a circular line of contact.

61. (Currently Amended) A clamp, comprising:

    a handle assembly;  
    a gripping assembly having a pair of jaws that can be opened and closed to grip an element; and  
    a shaft assembly having:  
        a flexible shaft having a proximal end that is coupled to the handle assembly and a distal end that is coupled to the gripping assembly, the flexible shaft defining a bore and comprising a plurality of alternating first beads and second beads, each of the first and second beads having a surface;

    wherein each of the second beads has a larger inner diameter than each of the first beads, each of the second beads is supported on the surface of the two adjacent beads at a line of contact, and each of the second beads has a convex shape at the line of contact; and

    a cable which extends through the bore of the flexible shaft, the cable having a proximal end that is operatively coupled to the handle assembly and a distal end that is operatively coupled to the gripping assembly; and,

a rigid element that can be placed at a first position where the rigid element supports the shaft in a manner where the shaft cannot be bent, and in a second position where the shaft can be bent.

62. (Previously Presented) The clamp of claim 61, wherein the surface of each of the first beads has a convex shape at the line of contact.

63. (Cancelled).

64. (Previously Presented) The clamp of claim 61, wherein each of the second beads has a larger outer diameter than each of the first beads.

65. (Previously Presented) The clamp of claim 61, wherein each of the second beads has a smaller outer diameter than each of the first beads.

66. (Previously Presented) The clamp of claim 61, wherein each of the second beads has the same outer diameter as each of the first beads.

67. (Previously Presented) The clamp of claim 61, wherein the line of contact is a circular line of contact.

68. (Withdrawn) A shaft for use with a clamp device, comprising:

    a central member; and  
    a plurality of alternating first beads and second beads alternatingly positioned along the central member, wherein the second beads contact adjacent first beads along a line of contact, and wherein each of the second beads has a larger inner diameter than each of the first beads, each of the second beads is supported on a surface of two adjacent first beads at a line of contact, and the surface of each of the second beads has a convex shape at the line of contact.